The Boer War

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MEN-AT-ARMS SERIES

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OSPREY PUBLISHING LIMITED

Published in 1977 by
Osprey Publishing Ltd,
12–14 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LP
Member Company of the George Philip Group
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ISBN 0 85045 257 0
Filmset by BAS Printers Limited, Wallop, Hampshire
Printed in Hong Kong

The Background

In October 1899 the conflicts between Boer and British interests in South Africa, which had been brewing for almost one hundred years, finally boiled over in all-out war. The Second Boer War or South African War was to prove the greatest conflict in which Britain had been engaged since the Napoleonic Wars. This 'Last of the Gentleman's Wars', which as usual the British public felt sure would be a rapid one, lasted nearly three years, cost £222,000,000 and involved 450,000 Imperial troops of whom 22,000 died, just under three-quarters of them from disease.

The story begins in 1652 when the Dutch East India Company established a small settlement on the Southern Cape of South Africa. Its inhabitants, mostly farmers (*Boers* in Dutch), built up the settlement into a thriving community. As the population grew so the Boers became more and more independent, claiming the right to make their own laws and to sell their produce to anyone who would pay their price. When the company went bankrupt the management of the Cape was taken over by the Dutch government who controlled it until 1795, when the exiled Prince of Orange unwillingly signed it over to Britain to stop it falling into the hands of the French, whose armies had already occupied his country.

In 1802 the Treaty of Amiens ended the long European conflict and the Cape was returned to the Dutch, but in 1806, when the French were once more at war with half of Europe, sixty-three British ships sailed into Simon's Bay and seized the Cape to ensure the route to India. In 1814, with Napoleon in exile, the Prince of Orange returned to his country and demanded the restitution of all Dutch colonies, but Britain was determined to keep the Cape and thereby protect her sea routes to the east. In 1815, under the Act of the Congress of Vienna, Britain paid £6,000,000 to the Dutch for Cape Colony and after 162 years the Boers passed unwillingly under foreign rule.

In 1834 the Boers' resentment of British domination grew even stronger when, under the Emancipation Act, they were deprived of their black slaves. From 1836 to 1838 some 10,000 Boers, representing nearly a quarter of the European population of Cape Colony packed their waggons and began the great trek north away from the 'rednecks'. Between the Orange and Vaal

Z.A.R. (Transvaal) Police. Loathed by the *Uitlanders*, the Zarps, as they were known, were described by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle as 'Bullies in peace, but heroes in war'. Their uniform is clearly shown in the illustration

President Marcus Steyn (l) and President Paul Johannes Kruger (r), leaders of the Boer Republics of the Orange Free State and the South African Republic (Transvaal) who declared war on Great Britain in December 1899

rivers some of the Boers settled down and founded the Orange Free State but for others the trek continued. These split into two groups and pressed on in different directions, one going east over the Drakensberg mountains to Natal, and the second pushing further north, settling between the Vaal and Limpopo rivers to found the Transvaal Republic.

In 1843 Natal was annexed by the British. The other two republics were recognised by Britain in 1852 and 1854, the Transvaal by the Sands River Convention and the Orange Free State by the Bloemfontein Convention.

In 1877 the British feared that a war between the Transvaal and the warlike Zulus could incite a native rebellion in the south and the bankrupt republic was annexed by the Crown with surprisingly little opposition.

After the Zulu War of 1879 in which the Zulu nation was finally crushed, the Boers felt there was no further reason why the British should remain in control of their country. One of the leaders of the cause for the re-establishment of a republic was Stephanus Johannes Paulus Kruger, who was regarded as a rabble rouser by the British and as a great patriot by the Boers.

In April 1880, after a hard-fought election campaign in which he condemned 'the insane and immoral policy of annexation', Gladstone and his Liberal party crushingly defeated Disraeli's Conservatives. The Transvaal Boers were overjoyed for they believed that a Liberal government would mean a swift return to independence. Unfortunately, once in power, Gladstone reversed his policy and informed the Boers, 'Our judgement is that the Queen cannot be advised to relinquish her sovereignty over the Transvaal.' To Kruger and his followers there remained only one solution: rebellion.

The Transvaal war of 1881 lasted three months and saw the defeat of the British at Bronkhorstspruit, Ingogo River, Laing's Nek and finally at

Majuba Hill. With the signing of the Treaty of Pretoria in August, Britain recognised the independence of the Transvaal subject to a vaguely defined suzerainty and control over her foreign affairs. According to Thomas Carter, correspondent of the *Natal Times*, the verdict of the British soldier was, 'A miserable ending to a miserable war'.

The discovery of gold on the Witswatersrand in 1886 brought the Transvaal not only the wealth that she needed but also an influx of foreigners. These were *Uitlanders*, many of them British, and by the 1890's they were beginning to outnumber the Boers. The Transvaal government under Kruger was determined to prevent these *Uitlanders* from gaining too strong a foothold in their country. They did so by levying very heavy taxes without allowing them the rights of full citizenship.

The *Uitlanders* appealed to Britain for help but the government refused to intervene, so they began to consider an armed rising. For Cecil Rhodes, then Prime Minister of Cape Colony and still cherishing the dream of seeing the Union Jack flying from the Cape to Cairo, the potentially explosive situation had to be exploited. He offered the *Uitlanders* his support and the assistance of a party of mounted police under Dr Leander Starr Jameson, an administrator of the British South Africa Company, who would ride into the Transvaal once the revolt broke out.

Everything seemed to be going according to plan but at the last minute Rhodes was informed by his agents in the Transvaal that the general opinion of the *Uitlanders* was against forcibly taking over the country. For Rhodes the venture was at an end, but Jameson was determined to continue. He felt sure that once he actually entered the Transvaal the rebellion would start spontaneously.

The raid was a fiasco. On 29 December 1895, Jameson crossed the border and began to advance on Johannesburg. A forward party of Jameson's men had been detailed to cut the telegraph lines, but they overlooked a branch line. This enabled Kruger to be kept informed of the invasion as soon as it began and to mobilise his commandos. On 1 January, at Krugersdorp, the Boers under General Piet Cronje set up an ambush which cost Jameson some 30 men killed or wounded. The next day, after a desperate attempt to outflank Cronje's forces, the raiders surrendered and were taken to Pretoria Jail.

In March 1899, the *Uitlanders* sent a petition to Queen Victoria in which they stated their grievances and asked Britain to intercede for them. A meeting between Sir Alfred Milner, the British High Commissioner and President Kruger ended

O.V.S. (Orange Free State) Artillery, a battery of field guns with gunners in service dress. Formed in 1857, the corps led a very shadowy existence until 1880, when the command was given to the German, R.F.W. Albrecht. During the South African War the main body of the artillery served with Cronje and almost ceased to exist after his surrender at Paardeberg

Major R. F. W. Albrecht in the undress uniform of the O.V.S. (Orange Free State) Artillery, 1899. Given the command of the corps on 8 November 1880, Albrecht was responsible for its growth from 3 officers and 14 other ranks to 5 officers and 400 other ranks at the outbreak of the war. Albrecht was captured at Paardeberg and imprisoned on St Helena, together with other Boer captives

in failure and both sides began to prepare for war. On 8 October Kruger, with the backing of President Steyn of the Orange Free State, issued an ultimatum demanding that Britain: (1) give up her suzerainty; (2) withdraw her troops from the Transvaal border; (3) remove all reinforcements from South Africa within a reasonable time; (4) set up an arbitration committee to settle mutual differences; and (5) give an assurance that British troops *en route* for the Cape would not be landed. If the conditions were not complied with by 5 p.m. on the 11th, the two Boer republics would regard this as a declaration of war. On Wednesday 11 October at 'tea time', as *The Times* humorously reported, war broke out between Great Britain and the Transvaal and Orange Free State Republics.

The Armies

The two armies that were to face each other on the battlefield of the South African veldt were diametrically opposed in outlook and method. The influence of the Duke of Cambridge, who had retired in 1895 after forty years as Commander-in-Chief, still lingered on over the British Army. Hampered by tradition and the lack of effective training, the British soldier was, in the words of Lord Wolseley, '. . . the worst paid labourer in England'. Often illiterate and unskilled, 'Tommy Atkins'' military knowledge was confined to three weeks of field training and route marches during the year; for the rest he was parading, pipe claying and polishing his equipment. This turned him into an unthinking machine, and he was described by one foreign military observer as 'excellent for fighting savages'.

In 1899 the *Navy and Army Illustrated* attempted to explain Britain's martial ability by printing a letter, in rather dubious taste, from 'a distinguished Frenchman' who chose to remain anonymous. 'The British soldier is no better than any other, but he has won many battles by virtue of his insufferable conceit. Even when he has been handsomely beaten, the same has prevented him from acknowledging it and retiring from the field, as he ought to have done if he played the game fairly. But what can you do with men who are so infatuated with conceit that every private soldier says to himself, "The British Army is the finest in the world, my regiment is the finest in the British Army, and I am the finest soldier in my regiment"? Clearly all argument, mental or physical, is lost on such people.'

The late Victorian officer, largely a gifted amateur with private means, cannot be said to have taken his profession very seriously. Even in 1881, the unfashionability of keenness was all too apparent to some far-seeing officers. Captain J. M. Grierson, Royal Artillery, who became Assistant Adjutant General, Army Headquarters South Africa in 1900, wrote in an article to an Indian newspaper:

'Until the great body of British Officers becomes convinced that the days of playing at soldiers are over, and that work and work in the fullest sense of the word, must now be the watchword, we despair of any attempt at re-organisation. By work we do not mean the daily duty, which is carried out with the greatest conscientiousness by British Officers ... but study, hard study, which must be encouraged and fostered in every way by the authorities.'

The minority of officers who were anxious to become skilled in their chosen profession could, after asking the permission of their commanding officer, take the Staff College examination, but most regimental commanders were loathe to lose their best material to the Staff, hence the numerous Artillery and Engineer officers who attained high rank. If he passed the exam, his studies in strategy and tactics would be based on the Franco-Prussian War and the American Civil War but if it was practical experience he wanted, it could always be found in India or Africa where punitive and other expeditions were regular occurences.

The Intelligence Division under its director, Sir John Ardagh, was maintained on a shoe-string budget and was hopelessly understaffed. *The Times History of the War in South Africa* pointed out that, 'Whereas the German General Staff employed over three hundred officers spending £270,000, the Intelligence and Mobilisation Divisions of the British Army only employed seventeen officers at a cost of £11,000.' At the same period the Transvaal Republic was spending nearly ten times as much on Intelligence. The editor of *The Times*, equally surprised at the lack of interest shown by the government and War Office in the Intelligence Division, explained to the Elgin Commission on the war in South Africa, whose report was published in 1903, that:

'We did not spend enough money, or send enough officers. The eight or ten who went out did very good work, but they were fewer than the men I employed as *Times* correspondents, and I should have been ashamed to have sent correspondents anywhere, or even a commercial traveller with the sums of money they were given.'

From 1896–1899, the Intelligence Division gave numerous warnings and accurate information on the state of affairs in the Boer Republics but failed to influence the War Office in its policy, as

'Cavalry' battery of the Z.A.R. (Transvaal) State Artillery, gunners in full dress, 1899. This unit came into existence just before the outbreak of the war

was pointed out in *The Times History:*

'Far worse than the starved condition of the Intelligence Division was its lack of authority. It was a mere information bureau with absolutely no control over military policy. Its investigations were not directed with the sense of responsibility that belongs to those who inquire in order to act upon their own information, nor had it the power to insist upon the taking of those measures of the necessity of which its special knowledge convinced it.'

The Boer army had none of the smartness or discipline of its adversary, the only regular uniformed units being the police, the *O.V.S. Staats Artillerie* of the Orange Free State and the *Z.A.R. Staats Artillerie* of the Transvaal.

The Boer was a frontiersman in the true sense of the word; often living in the wilds, he developed the necessary skills of riding and shooting that allowed him to survive and in times of war, turned him into a first class fighting man. He was an

O.V.S. (Orange Free State) Artillery Band, full dress, 1897. When Albrecht took over the command of the corps the band outnumbered the fighting unit by 2 to 1

individual but when threatened, joined his neighbours in locally raised mounted detachments known as 'commandos'. These were composed of all the males from an electoral district, that were old enough to carry a gun. These electoral districts were divided into precincts under the command of field-cornets, and were then subdivided into corporalships. Even though grouped the Boer remained essentially an individual, providing his own horse and weapons and having the freedom to refuse to fight or do anything against his will; he could even return home when he felt like it.

The mustering of a typical commando is very well described by Victor Pohl from the Orange Free State:

'Soon there were gathered a large number of farmer-soldiers, hefty, clear-eyed, bronzed, and good-natured men from the open veld . . . Sitting their horses like cowboys, they wore what they had stood up in when they were called up, and their rifles and bandoliers were slung carelessly on their persons according to individual inclination. A raincoat or blanket, or both, were rolled tightly and fastened to the pommel or tail of each saddle, and in most cases saddle-bags stuffed to bursting with boer-rusks, bread, and biltong (dried meat), completed their outfits. To an outsider this motley and unwarlike gathering would have appeared to be without leaders or discipline, for the Boer leaders did not differ in appearance from the rest of the slouching burghers. And yet when they addressed the men they were listened to with earnest attention, although not with parade-ground rigidity. What these men lacked in military discipline was largely made up for by their independence of thought and action, and their sense of responsibility. Moreover many of them were deeply religious, and all these qualities, combined with their profound faith in their cause, their reliance on themselves and their Mausers, and the knowledge that they were fighting for their homes and country, made of this undisciplined crowd a formidable army, one to whose prowess the civilised world was to pay tribute.'

The Orange Free State Artillery, raised in 1857, had a very shadowy existence until 1880, when command of the corps was given to a German officer, Captain R. F. W. Albrecht. On his appointment the strength of the corps was three

General Sir Redvers Buller V.C. (l) and General Sir George White V.C. (r). Buller's repeated failures in relieving Ladysmith, where White was besieged, cost him the command of the army in South Africa. One of the nicknames given to Buller by the civilians at home was 'Pigger' due to the fact that 'he was always getting stuck!'

officers, one sergeant, one teacher and twelve gunners. At the same date the band, with its bandmaster and twenty-five musicians, was twice the size of the actual fighting unit. With Albrecht in command the corps continually expanded until, by the outbreak of the South African war, there were five officers and four hundred rank and file, including reservists and a signal section. During the war the main body of the artillery served with General Piet Cronje, and with his surrender in February 1900, it almost ceased to exist, although individual guns continued to serve with commandos.

The first unit of the *Transvaal Staats Artillery* was the *Battery Dingaan*, under the command of a German officer, Captain Otto H. Riedel. In 1881 it was reformed as *Die Artillerie Van Die Z.A.R.* and the following year amalgamated with the *Transvaal Rydende Politie*, having a total strength of sixty, thirty artillerymen and thirty policemen.

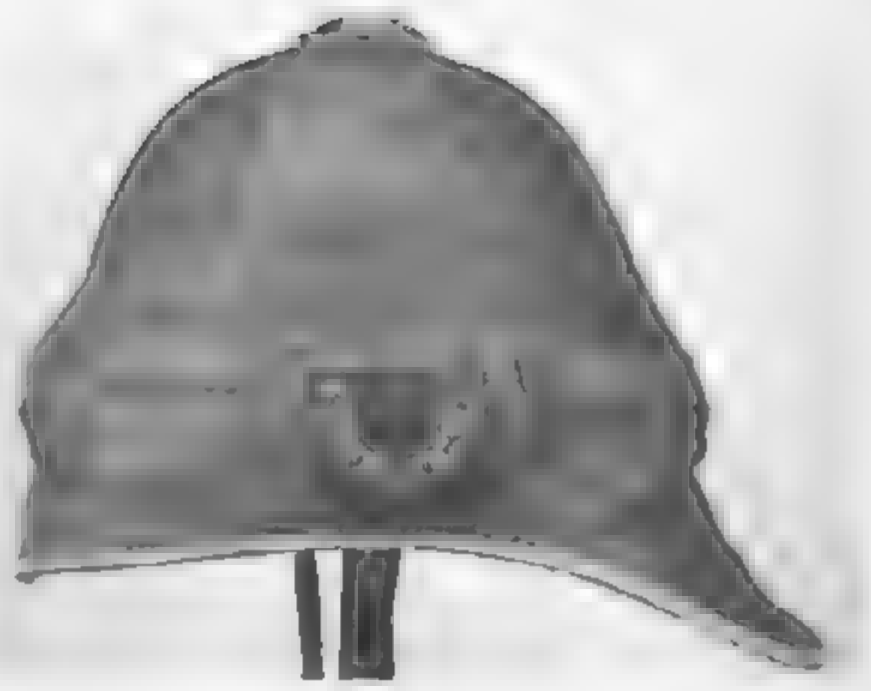
Under the threat of war with Great Britain the corps was reorganised, the police being formed into a separate body and the artillery strength being increased to four hundred men, comprising mountain, siege, field and mounted batteries as well as a telegraph section which had been formed in 1890. In 1901, having lost all their ordnance, the corps was employed as mounted infantry.

The Campaigns

From a military point of view the war was divided into three distinct phases of unequal length. The first, lasting from the outbreak of hostilities until January 1900 was a period of unparalleled failure for British arms.

On 12 October, after waiting on their frontiers for over a week, the Boers struck against Cape Colony and Natal. Commandant-General Joubert, in command of the main Transvaal force, crossed at Laing's Nek after having thrown out two wings to the east and west under Generals Erasmus and Koch, who entered Natal at Botha's Pass and Wool's Drift. Further to the east Com-

Foreign Service Helmet of the Connaught Rangers, 1901, showing the scarlet flash made from the shoulder straps of tunics, with the regimental title in white worsted embroidery. (See also description of plates A2 and F1)

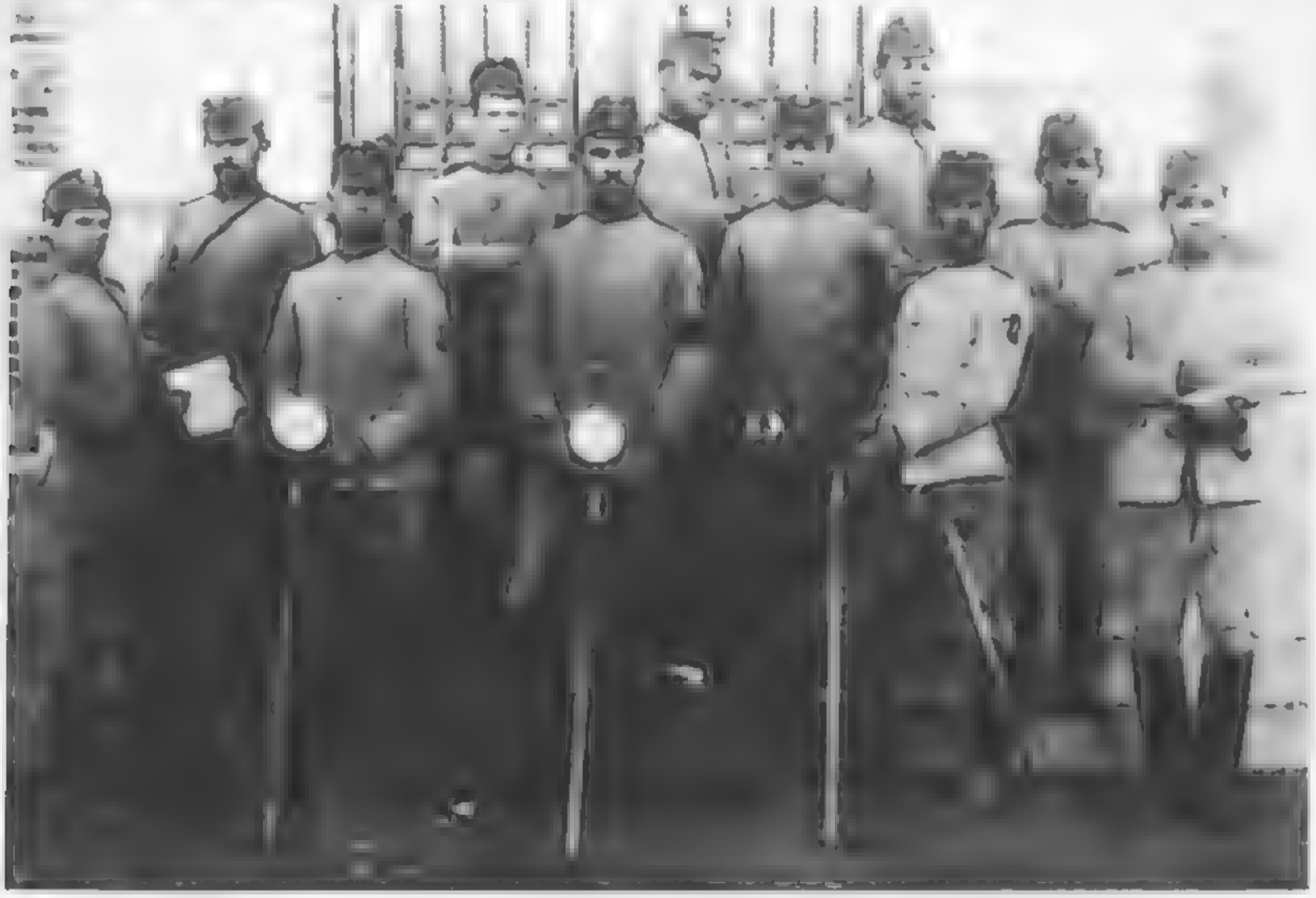


mandant Lukas Mayer crossed the Buffalo River at De Jager's Drift. Meanwhile the Orange Free Staters, under Commandant Prinsloo, crossed the Drakensburg Mountains through Van Reenan's Pass and Tintwa Pass, to the west, and approached Ladysmith

After the initial actions of the war at Talana Hill and Elandslaagte, a stunned British army of nearly 13,000 men was forced to retreat and then find itself besieged in the towns of Ladysmith, Kimberley and Mafeking.

On 14 October General Sir Redvers Buller, officially appointed Commander-in-Chief in South Africa six days before sailed from Southampton to join the Field Force of around 47,000 men who were converging on Capetown. On his arrival he divided his troops into three columns. The centre column under General Gatacre moved on the Boer held position at Stormberg, the left column under Lord Methuen advanced on Kimberley, while to the right the Commander-in-Chief established a camp at Frere, some twenty-five miles to the south of Ladysmith, from where he hoped to relieve the beleaguered town. The disasters that befell these three British offensives, at Stormberg, Magersfontein and Colenso, between 10 and 17 December 1899, was known in Britain as 'Black Week'. For Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the

Z.A.R. (Transvaal) State Artillery, Field Telegraph Section in service dress with royal blue fatigue cap, 1899



Lord Methuen (l) in command at Magersfontein, one of the disasters of 'Black Week'; and General French (r), whose Cavalry Division made a remarkable ride to relieve Kimberley

creator of Sherlock Holmes, it was '. . . the blackest one known during our generation, and the most disastrous for British arms during the century'

The British nation was shocked. 'Our Generals,' said Asquith, the future Liberal Prime Minister, 'seem neither able to win victories nor to give convincing reasons for their defeat.' Buller's failure and his subsequent message to General Sir George White in Ladysmith, suggesting he fire off all his ammunition and surrender, determined the British government to replace him. On 10 January 1900, Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, the new Commander-in-Chief in South Africa, arrived at Capetown accompanied by his Chief of Staff, Lord Kitchener of Khartoum

By 9 January Buller's strength had been augmented to 30,000 effectives with the addition of the 5th Division under General Sir Charles Warren. With the arrival of these men he set off on a renewed campaign to relieve Ladysmith. As Buller had not formulated a clear plan he handed over command of the operation to Warren.

On 16 January the British crossed the Tugela River. On the 20th, after waiting until his supplies were safely over, Warren advanced to the southern hills overlooking the Tugela. After an abortive attempt at capturing Tabanyama Hill which commanded the road to Ladysmith, Warren obtained Buller's reluctant approval to launch an attack against Spion Kop (look-out hill). This 'sickening fiasco', as Joseph Chamberlain called it, was perhaps the bloodiest and most futile engagement of the war and cost Buller's army about 1,200 men killed, wounded or taken prisoner as against some 300 Boer casualties

With the arrival of Roberts the second phase of the war, that of the British counter-offensive, began. For strategical purposes he had to have mobility, not only in his army but also in transport and supply. While Kitchener set about organising a system of mule waggons which would unshackle the army from dependence on the railway, Roberts assembled a substantial mounted force drawn

Commandant General Piet Joubert (l), leader of the Transvaal army at the beginning of the war; and General Christian de Wet (r), one of the ablest commanders of the Orange Free State

from every infantry battalion under his command By the middle of February Roberts outflanked Kimberley and sent General French and a strong cavalry force on a remarkable ride (120 miles in four days), which relieved the besieged town. On 27 February, the nineteenth anniversary of the Boer victory at Majuba Hill, Roberts accepted the surrender of General Piet Cronje and his army of 4,000 at Paardeberg. Two weeks later, on 13 March, the Union Jack was hoisted above the Residency in Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State. On 28 February, the Boers besieging Ladysmith withdrew and Buller was, at last, able to enter the town. After waiting for several weeks at Bloemfontein, Roberts resumed his march north. He despatched a column which relieved Mafeking on 17 May, after a siege that had lasted 217 days. After intermittent fighting he entered Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal, on 5 June 1900

At the beginning of October, Buller set out for England. He was soon followed by Roberts, who was to supercede Lord Wolseley as Commander-in-Chief at Horse Guards. The war was over, or so it seemed, but instead of peace, Lord Kitchener, the new Commander-in-Chief in South Africa, had to contend with an eighteen-month period of intensive guerilla activity.

In this last phase of the war Kitchener introduced new measures to limit the range and effectiveness of the Boer commandos still left in the field The technique of farm-burning, introduced before Roberts left South Africa, was intensified under Kitchener, with the object of denying the commandos the vital supplies they received from the civilian population. To house the destitute men, women and children, who were victims of the 'scorched earth' policy, and to protect the co-operative Boers from their fellow countrymen, the British authorities set up forty-six camps in which the refugees were concentrated under supervision.

Unfortunately, because of inadequate preparations, the camps became insanitary and disease ridden, thus causing the death of about 20,000 of the 117,000 inmates. In the early part of 1901 Kitchener initiated the Blockhouse system, by which the country was divided into sections with long barbed-wire barriers, commanded at intervals by fortified blockhouses from which patrols could maintain the security of the wire. Although only moderately successful, by the end of the war this arrangement consisted of some 8,000 blockhouses extending over an area of about 3,700 miles

On 7 August 1901, Kitchener issued a proclamation demanding the unconditional surrender, by 15 September, of all Boers still under arms. He was disappointed that it had no effect, for he was anxious to leave South Africa so that he could take up the post of Commander-in-Chief in India, an office that he had been promised by the Viceroy, Lord Curzon

During the early months of 1902, sporadic fighting still continued. Jan Smuts, Christian de Wet and Koos de la Rey led commando raids, even against Cape Colony. On 7 March, a column of 1,300 men under the command of Lord Methuen was attacked by de la Rey at Tweebosch. The 200 dead and wounded and the 600 prisoners, among them Lord Methuen, made it the worst defeat sustained by the British during the latter part of the war. Kitchener, who had been under a considerable strain, was appalled when he heard the news and went to bed for thirty-six hours, without food, telling his A.D.C. that his nerves had 'gone all to pieces'

On 10 April 1902 Schalk Burger, acting President of the Transvaal, and Marcus Steyn, President of the Orange Free State, after conferring with Botha, de Wet, de la Rey and each other, agreed to enter into peace negotiations with Kitchener. The discussions began two days later and lasted for almost a month, the Boers deliberating amongst themselves, with the British and with an assembly of the people at the small border town of Vereeniging. On 28 May, the Boers received the final draft of the peace terms agreed to by the British government, then repaired to Vereeniging where the final decision had to be made. The document which they took away with them contained the following main clauses: (1) the Boers were to lay down their arms and acknowledge King Edward VII as their lawful sovereign; (2) all prisoners and internees who took an oath of loyalty to the King would be released and their

British troops watching the battle of Colenso, 15 December 1899, the final disaster of 'Black Week' which aroused the British nation and forced the government to replace Buller as Commander-in-Chief. In the background is a 12-pdr naval gun

Royal Scots Fusiliers in a trench at Mooi River, 1899. Note the khaki helmet cover with regimental flash

possessions restored; (3) an amnesty would be granted for all acts of war except war crimes; (4) the Dutch language was to be given equality with English in schools and the law courts; (5) the British would undertake the substitution of the military administration by civil government, to be followed, 'as soon as circumstances permit it', by self-government; (6) no war tax was to be levied; (7) Britain would contribute three million pounds towards the cost of restoring and re-stocking the farms that had been destroyed.

The Boers were divided. Botha and Smuts of the Transvaal were strongly in favour of accepting the proposals, while Steyn and de Wet of the Orange Free State urged their rejection. At 5.30 p.m. on 31 May 1902, a vote was finally taken. By a large majority the delegates agreed to the British terms and the Boer commissioners appointed to sign the treaty immediately boarded a special train for Pretoria, where at 10.30 p.m. that same night, the Treaty of Vereeniging, as it came to be called, was signed in the dining-room of Kitchener's head-quarters

At the time of the Boer invasion the British forces in North Natal consisted of 4,000 men under General Penn Symons at Dundee, and about 8,000 men at Ladysmith under the newly arrived Commander-in-Chief, General Sir George White V.C., a sixty-four year old Irishman whose active military career had been spent entirely with the Indian Army. Since his arrival in Natal Colony he had been faced with the problem of whether or not he could retain the forward position at Dundee, in his view a very exposed situation. Many of White's officers thought it best to abandon that part of Natal north of the Tugela River, retire to the *opposite side and hold that position until the* expected Army Corps arrived. After an interview with Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson, the Governor of Natal, in whose opinion '. . . such a step would involve grave political results . . .', White determined '. . . to accept the military risk of holding Dundee as the lesser of two evils . . .'

The first engagement of the war, at Dundee, began at 2 30 a.m. on 20 October 1899, when Commandant Lukas Meyers's commando stumbled across a mounted infantry patrol at Smith's Nek, east of Dundee. A message to headquarters soon brought reinforcements for the patrol, who had taken up a defensive position in the dried up bed of the Sand Spruit facing Talana Hill, one of the prominent eminences that surrounded the town. Symons had always believed that the Boers would never attack British soldiers and therefore regarded the incident as a Boer raid and nothing else. Unfortunately he was proved wrong. At about 5.50 a.m., as the troops were busying themselves with their usual camp fatigues, the Boers, having positioned themselves with two Creusot 75mm field guns on Talana Hill the night before, opened fire and sent the first shell of the war screeching over the heads of the unsuspecting troops.

Despite the surprise Symon's reaction was quick and effective. While the infantry formed up, *the artillery moved into action and raked the top* of Talana Hill, with such accuracy that not only were the Boer guns silenced, but nearly a thousand men panicked, rushed down the side of the hill and made off. After a ride of fifty miles, one prominent Boer reported the complete destruction of the whole Boer force. The many that remained positioned themselves among the rocks on the summit and prepared for battle. To dislodge the Boers, Symons proposed to reinforce the troops in the

Spion Kop, after the battle: British dead clog the shallow main trench on the summit. The engagement at Spion Kop was perhaps the most costly and futile of the war

Muster of a typical Boer Commando, this one at Winburg before the outbreak of war

Sand Spruit and then to launch a frontal attack on the hill under artillery cover, while the cavalry were to defend the camp but be prepared to move round the north of Talana and cut off the Boers should they retreat

The preliminary movements were completed by about 6.30 a.m. At 7.30 a.m. the infantry advanced to a small eucalyptus plantation about 1,000 yards in front of Sand Spruit. They moved in extended order, the 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers leading, followed by the 1st King's Royal Rifle Corps and the 1st Royal Irish Fusiliers. As they neared the front edge of the wood the Boers opened fire, forcing the troops to seek refuge behind a stone wall that surrounded the plantation. Symons grew impatient and rode forward to see what was halting the attack. Dismounting from his horse he moved along the line, encouraging his men. He then stepped through a gap in the wall to inspect the position ahead. A few seconds later a Mauser bullet ripped through his tunic and mortally wounded him in the stomach. As he was being helped back to the dressing station his second in command, Brigadier-General Yule, ordered the assault.

As the infantry moved forward a withering fire greeted them from the crest of the hill, inflicting heavy casualties and forcing them to take shelter behind another wall that crossed the face of the slope. Here there was a prolonged halt so that reinforcements could be brought up for the final assult and the artillery could take up a new position and continue the bombardment of the ridge At about 12 o'clock there came a lull in the Boer rifle fire that enabled the infantry to push on up the hill towards the crest. An officer involved in the attack later wrote:

'The ground in front of me was literally rising in dust from the bullets, and the din seemed to blend with every other sound into a long drawn-out roar. Half-way over the terrace I looked round over my shoulder and the whole ground we had already covered was strewn with bodies, and no more men were coming over the wall At that moment I was hit through the knee. I hopped to the foot of the cliff. There I began to pull myself up; bullets from both flanks were flying thick. I was hit a second time by a shot from above: the bullet hit me in the back and came out in front of my thigh . . . I had crawled onto the crest line when a Boer stood up twenty yards in front of me He threw up his rifle and covered me and I took a step forward and covered him with my pistol. I forgot my wounded leg, and as I pulled the trigger the leg gave way and I fell. I drew myself back under cover of a rock and raised myself carefully.

ready to shoot if I spotted my man again. He was gone, and as I was looking I was hit a third time, along the back, the bullet coming out just by my spine. After a while, hearing W 's voice I asked if he had any dressings. He brought me one. He was wounded over the eye. The firing was gradually dying down, only to bring to our ears what was infinitely more painful to hear, the moaning of wounded men from the terrace below and the hill-side around us.'

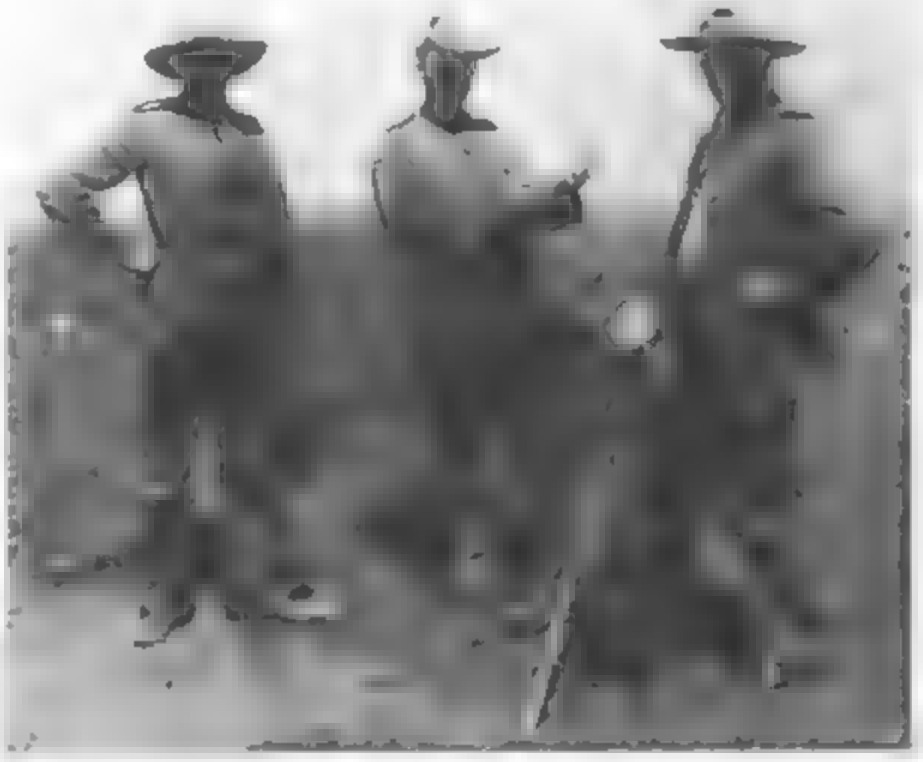
The defeated Boers streamed down the side of the hill and across the valley below. The cavalry, with orders to cut off such a flight were split into two. The smaller section, consisting of two squadrons, pursued the enemy eastwards and eventually returned safely to camp but the other, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Moller pushed on in a northerly direction and came into contact with a superior force, was surrounded and after a two-hour engagement was compelled to surrender.

The battle of Talana (or Dundee) was represented in England as a glorious victory, but it was a Pyrrhic one for the Boers had only suffered 150 casualties while the British had lost more than 500 men including their commander

On the following day, 21 October, a more successful engagement took place at Elandslaagte, a town on the railway line between Dundee and Ladysmith, which the Boers had captured on 19 October. White ordered Major-General French, who was commanding the cavalry of the Natal Force, to move north from Ladysmith at 4 a.m. with five squadrons of the Imperial Light Horse and the Natal Field Battery Half a battalion of the 1st Manchesters, with railway and telegraph construction companies, were to follow him by rail at 6 a.m. to ' . . . clear the neighbourhood of Elandslaagte of the enemy, and to cover the construction of the railway and telegraph lines'.

French's dawn attack achieved complete surprise, but the Boers were too quick to be caught and managed to ride off to the nearby hills where they had two artillery pieces in position. French, unprepared for the strength of the opposition and the accuracy of their artillery fire, fell back and contacted headquarters for reinforcements. White was determined to strike hard and immediately sent out one squadron of 5th Dragoon Guards, one

A group of Transvaal Burghers, 1899



O.V.S. (Orange Free State) Artillery in field service dress, 1899

squadron of 5th Lancers and two batteries of Royal Field Artillery, by road, and the 1st Devonshire Regiment and five companies of the Gordon Highlanders, by rail. The command of the infantry was given to Colonel Ian Hamilton

The attack that followed the arrival of these extra troops was successful in overcoming the determined Boer resistance and in reopening the line of communications that had been temporarily cut.

White, nervous of an attack by a fresh Boer force, decided not to follow up his victory but to withdraw to Ladysmith, where a few days later he was joined by General Yule and the troops from Dundee, who had completed an unpleasant march

Lord Roberts (l) replaced Buller as Commander-in-Chief in South Africa and, with his drive and imagination, at last brought victory within reach. Lord Kitchener (r), Roberts' Chief of Staff and successor as Commander, had to deal with eighteen months of guerilla warfare before the war finally ended

of sixty miles through torrential rain with little to eat but bully beef and biscuits, and nothing to drink but muddy water. Their arrival was witnessed by G. W. Steevens, special correspondent for the *Daily Mail*, who was to die of enteric fever during the siege of Ladysmith:

'Before next morning was grey in came the 1st Rifles. They splashed uphill to their blue-roofed hut on the south-west side of the town. By the time the sun was up they were fed by their sister battalion, the 2nd, and had begun to unwind their putties. But what a sight! Their putties were not soaked and not caked: say, rather, that there may have been a core of puttie inside, but that the mens legs were embedded in a serpentine cast of clay. As for their boots, you could only infer them from the huge balls of stratified mud men bore round their feet . . . Officers and men alike bristled stiff with a week's beard . . . Evelids hung fat and heavy over hollow cheeks and pointed cheek-bones. Only the eye remained – the sky-blue, steel-keen, hard, clear, unconquerable English eye – to tell that thirty-two miles without rest, four days without a square meal – still found them soldiers at the end.

'That was the beginning of them; but they were not all in till the middle of the afternoon . . . After them came the guns . . . war-torn and fresh from slaughter.

'Through fire, water, and earth, the Dundee column had come home again.'

MAGERSFONTEIN AND COLENSO

By early December a British army of nearly 20,000 men was assembled at Frere. When Buller arrived the war had been going well: Lord Methuen had fought the Boers at Belmont and Enslin and was driving on to relieve Kimberley and in Cape Colony General Gatacre was advancing on the Boer-held position at Stormberg Junction. To relieve Ladysmith Buller had only to cross the Tugela River and push back the Boers' forces.

The troops that Buller had available consisted of four Infantry Brigades commanded by General Barton (6th Brigade), Major-General Hart (5th

Brigade), Major-General Hildyard (2nd Brigade and General Lyttelton (4th Brigade); a mounted Brigade made up of the 1st Royal Dragoons, 13th Hussars, South African Light Horse and some irregular units such as Bethune's and Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry. His artillery was made up of five batteries under the command of Colonel Long, and two 4.7 and several 12-pdr. naval guns under the command of Captain Jones of *H.M.S. Forte*

By 11 December, Buller's plan for the relief of Ladysmith had taken shape. His force would cross the Tugela at Potgieter's Drift and advance on the town by the Acton Homes-Ladysmith Road Then, during the next forty-eight hours, came the news of two crushing defeats; Stormberg and Magersfontein. Gatacre had attempted a night march followed by a dawn attack on the Boer positions. The column, led by scouts of the Cape Mounted Rifles, lost their way and by accident ran into a Boer picket who opened fire, attracting the attention of a Boer Commando who soon arrived and forced the column to retire. Actual battle casualties where relatively light but when Gatacre returned to his base camp at Molteno it was discovered that some 600 men had been left behind as prisoners of the Boers

At Magersfontein Lord Methuen, with an army of 13,000 men, planned a night attack on the Boer lines which had been carefully reconnoitred in advance. After a heavy bombardment (which Methuen thought had destroyed the Boer defences, but in fact had only caused three casualties and hardly damaged the intrenchments) the Highland Brigade, chosen to lead the attack, moved in and were decimated, and their leader, Major-General Andrew Wauchope, mortally wounded. The battle that followed went on for most of the day until the Highlanders, who had been exposed to a crippling fire, retreated. Methuen's losses were heavy. Nearly a thousand men were killed or wounded, while the Boers had only about 200 casualties.

British infantry boarding an armoured train

Wounded British soldiers in Waggon House, Klip Drift

On 12 December Buller called his senior officers together and announced that the plans for the relief of Ladysmith had been changed and that he now proposed to make a frontal attack on Colenso.

From the very beginning everything went wrong for the British at Colenso. Colonel Long's artillery forged ahead and came under a withering fire from the concealed Boers as he unlimbered his guns some 500 yards from the river. In under an hour most of the gunners had fallen and the twelve artillery pieces were abandoned. Meanwhile, Major-General Hart's Brigade '. . . got into a devil of a mess . . .' when they were led into a U-shaped loop of the river, where they made a magnificent target for the Boers, who poured volley after volley into the khaki-clad mass. Within forty minutes some 400 of the Brigade were dead and Buller was forced to order the withdrawal. Things were no better on the right flank where the Mounted Brigade made an unsuccessful attack on Hlangwana Hill.

The only course left open to Buller was to break off the action but first he had to get away the guns. This was a perilous task, for it meant crossing four hundred yards of open ground, limbering up the guns and dragging them back, under fire the whole time. When volunteers were called for, two limber teams and two officers came forward immediately. One of the officers was Captain Walter Norris Congreve of the Rifle Brigade and the other was Lieutenant the Honourable Frederick Hugh Sherston Roberts of the King's Royal Rifle Corps, only son of Field-Marshal Lord Roberts of Kandahar.

Lieutenant Salt, of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers described the rescue attempt in a letter home:

'I was on a rise of a hill to their right, and could see every inch of the ground from start to finish. One could see the bullets striking all round them, and it seemed a marvel that they were not hit. When they were about halfway across, one team came to grief, and had to lie where they were under a hot fire. Another was struck, and became a struggling mass before they reached the guns.

Major Albrecht of the O.V.S. (Orange Free State) Artillery in the field, 1900

Three got to the guns, hooked on their teams, and started to gallop back. A shell, as far as I could see, struck one of the guns, and turned it right over, but the other two got safely back. It was an awful sight, but fearfully exciting.'

Lieutenant Roberts was one of those hit. Three bullets ripped through his tunic and flung him to the ground severely wounded. Congreve was also badly wounded but suceeded in crawling out and bringing Roberts to safety. Both these officers were awarded the Victoria Cross

The British casualty list at Colenso was a heavy one, 7 officers and 136 other ranks killed; 47 officers and 709 other ranks wounded; 15 officers and 187 other ranks missing; 5 officers and 33 other ranks prisoner. The Boers, on the other hand, had only seven men killed and twenty-two wounded.

From Sir R. Buller to Sir G. White:

'I tried Colenso yesterday but failed; the enemy is too strong for my force . . . I suggest you fire away as much ammunition as you can and make best terms you can . . . recollect to burn your cipher, decipher, and code-books, and all deciphered messages.'

The three defeats of 'Black Week' and the above correspondence decided the War Office to appoint a new Commander-in-Chief in South Africa. Buller received the news of his replacement in a telegram from the War Office

'The prosecution of the campaign in Natal is being carried on under quite unexpected difficulties, and in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government it will require your presence and whole attention.

'It has been decided . . . under these circumstances to appoint Field-Marshal Lord Roberts as Commander-in-Chief, South Africa, his Chief of Staff being Lord Kitchener.'

On 10 January 1900, the day of Lord Roberts' arrival at Cape Town, Redvers Buller, his force augmented by 10,000 men with the arrival of Sir Charles Warren's 5th Division, was preparing another drive to relieve Ladysmith

A group of mounted Burghers

SPION KOP

On 16 January Buller set off with a force of 24,000 infantry, 2,500 mounted troops, eight field batteries and ten naval guns. His plan was to move north-westward along the southern bank of the Tugela River, cross it at Trichardt's Drift, gain the open plain north of Spion Kop and advance towards the invested town only twenty miles away. To do this he proposed to send Warren's Division on a sweeping left flanking movement round the Ridgeway Hills, then move on eastwards to join up with Lyttelton's Brigade, who were to come up from Potgeiter's Drift. The command of the expedition was given to Sir Charles Warren

At first the advance went well. The British crossed the Tugela but then waited while their supplies were ferried over. On the 20th, the troops advanced to the southern hills overlooking the river. Meanwhile the Boers, under Louis Botha who had taken over the command of the Upper Tugela, reinforced and extended their lines of defence. Warren proposed to dislodge the Boers by a direct attack on the hills and, after obtaining Buller's reluctant approval, decided to storm the highest eminence in the centre of the Boer defences, Spion Kop. To their cost, the British were unaware that Spion Kop has a flat triangular summit sloping from the south, with two outlying knolls: Conical Hill at the extremity of the northern spur and Aloa Knoll near the eastern rim.

At 8.30 p.m. on 23 January the attack was launched under the command of Major-General E. R. P. Woodgate with Lieutenant-Colonel Thorneycroft as guide. The troops slowly climbed up the slope, endeavouring to be as quiet as possible to avoid alerting the Boer picket which they thought must be occupying the crest. At about 3 a.m. the column reached the summit and fixing their bayonets charged over the crest. One Boer was killed and the rest made a hasty retreat down the northern slope. A few moments later Warren's men far below heard three faint cheers from the summit. Spion Kop had been captured at the cost of only three men slightly wounded

Woodgate, whose instructions were to hold the

summit, now ordered his men to dig in but the ground was so hard and rocky that it prevented the construction of anything more than the shallowest of trenches with a parapet.

All through the night attack the summit had been shrouded in a dense blanket of mist and it was only at 7 o'clock that it began to disperse, revealing to the British their true situation. Only the southern end of the summit had been captured but, worse still, their hastily-built entrenchments were exposed to enemy fire from all directions, for when Botha heard of Spion Kop's capture, at 4 a.m., he had immediately positioned his guns and men so that they commanded the top of the hill. The Boer emplacements stretched from Green Hill in the north-west, to Conical Hill in the north, Aloa Knoll on the eastern rim and around to Twin Peaks in the east, which looked straight down the length of the British trenches

As the sunshine replaced the mist an accurate and wuthering fire was directed onto the British position. Shortly after 8.30 in the morning, as he was walking along the trenches with his staff encouraging his men, Woodgate was mortally wounded in the head. The slaughter was too much for some of the Lancashire Fusiliers who waved white handkerchiefs and tried to slip down to the Boer positions where they could give themselves up. Thorneycroft managed to retrieve the situation and, after being reinforced by men of the Middlesex Regiment and Imperial Light Infantry, managed to hold on for the rest of the day

Every so often the artillery and rifle fire would cease as the Boers launched a counter-attack to retake the hill. These were repulsed with heavy losses, but as soon as the Boers regained their positions the barrage would start again. The turmoil on the crest was later described by a British officer:

'I crawled along a little way with half my company, and then brought up others in the same manner. The men of the different regiments already on the hill were mixed up, and ours met the same fate. It was impossible, under the circumstances, to keep regimental control. One unit merged into another; one officer gave directions to this or that unit, or to another battalion. I saw some tents on the far side of the hill to our front,

A Creusot Long Tom at Mafeking, 1900

The muster of the Ladysmith Commando

and knowing the enemy must be there, opened with volleys at 1800 yards, when we saw a puff of smoke, indicating that one of the Boers guns had just fired. We lay prone, and could only venture a volley now and again, firing independently at times when the shower of bullets seemed to fall away, and the shells did not appear likely to land specially amongst us. Everywhere, however, it was practically the same deadly smash of shells, mangling and killing all about us. The only troops actually close to me then were a party of the Lancashire Fusiliers inside a *schanze*, F Company of the Middlesex, and a mixed company of other troops on the left front. A good many shells from the big guns burst near us, and a lance-corporal of the Fusiliers was killed. The only point I could see rifle-fire proceeding from was a trench, the third, I believe, occupied by our troops on the right, and looking towards Spearman's.'

After General Woodgate had been mortally wounded there was great confusion as to who was in command at the summit. Buller had told Warren to place Thorneycroft in charge, but communications were so bad that the news failed to reach some of the officers under his command. At one point Colonel Cooke of the Scottish Rifles made contact with Thorneycroft and flatly refused to take orders from a brevet Lieutenant-Colonel who was his junior in rank

On the barren veldt below, the British reserves stood idly by as their comrades were slaughtered. Only one officer, Major-General Lyttelton, whose Brigade had crossed the Tugela at Potgeiter's Drift, realised that something had to be done to relieve the situation. He marched his men up to Twin Peaks, the source of some of the most destructive enfilading fire on Spion Kop, took them and silenced the Boer artillery. But the conquest of Twin Peaks was not part of Buller's overall plan and Lyttelton was ordered to withdraw. One of the only real chances of averting defeat had been thrown away.

At sunset the main fight had ended and the British still occupied the hill. But Thorneycroft had made up his mind to withdraw, for he felt sure that the next morning would only bring a repeat of the carnage that had been suffered on the summit all day. As the British slowly made their way down the hill, so the Boers were mounting their horses and slipping away from Spion Kop, disheartened by the resistance of the British and the heavy casualties they themselves had suffered. Louis Botha, refusing to admit defeat, managed to halt the Boer withdrawal and persuade the men to

1

2

3

1 Colour-Sergeant, Infantry of the Line, full dress

2 Private, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, service dress

3 Private, Mounted Infantry Company, service dress

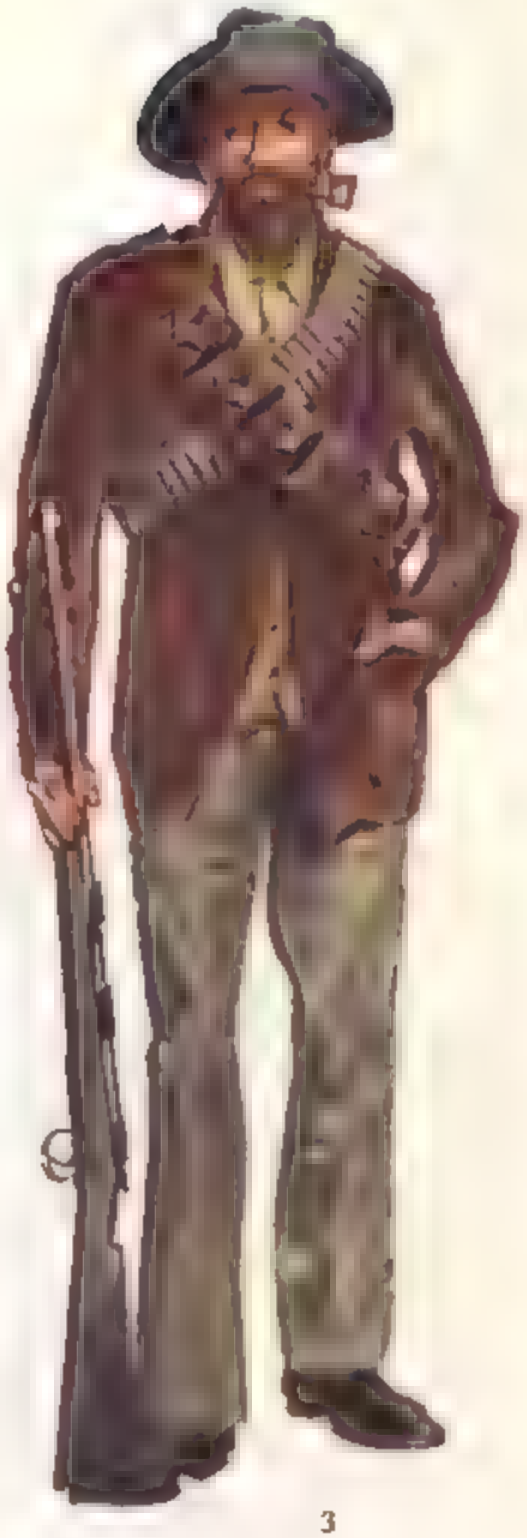
MICHAEL ROFFE

1 Lieutenant, Royal Navy, tropical dress
2 Gunner's Mate, Naval Brigade, service dress
3 Lieutenant, Naval Brigade, service dress

MICHAEL ROFFE

1

2



3

1 Gunner, Orange Free State Artillery, full dress

2 Gunner, Transvaal State Artillery, service dress

3 Boer

Trumpeter, 17th Lancers, service dress

MICHAEL ROFF

Boer

MICHAEL ROFFE

1 Officer, Suffolk Regiment, service dress
2 Army Reserve Nursing Sister
3 Private, City Imperial Volunteers, service dress

1

2

3

1 Piper, Black Watch, service dress
2 Officer, Highland Light Infantry, service dress
3 Private, Gordon Highlanders, full dress

1 Dispatch rider, Duke of Edinburgh's Volunteer Rifles, service dress

2 Trooper, South African Light Horse, service dress

3 Corporal, New South Wales Lancers, full dress

M CHAEL ROFFE

return. As dawn broke two men could be seen waving their hats and rifles in triumph on the summit. A few of the Boers had climbed the hill and found it occupied only by the 1,200 dead and wounded soldiers whose bodies lay in piles in the inadequate trenches they had been defending.

On 27 January, Buller's dejected army found itself on the southern bank of the Tugela. The retreat had been carried out in exemplary fashion, without a waggon or man lost.

THE RELIEF OF KIMBERLEY AND LADYSMITH

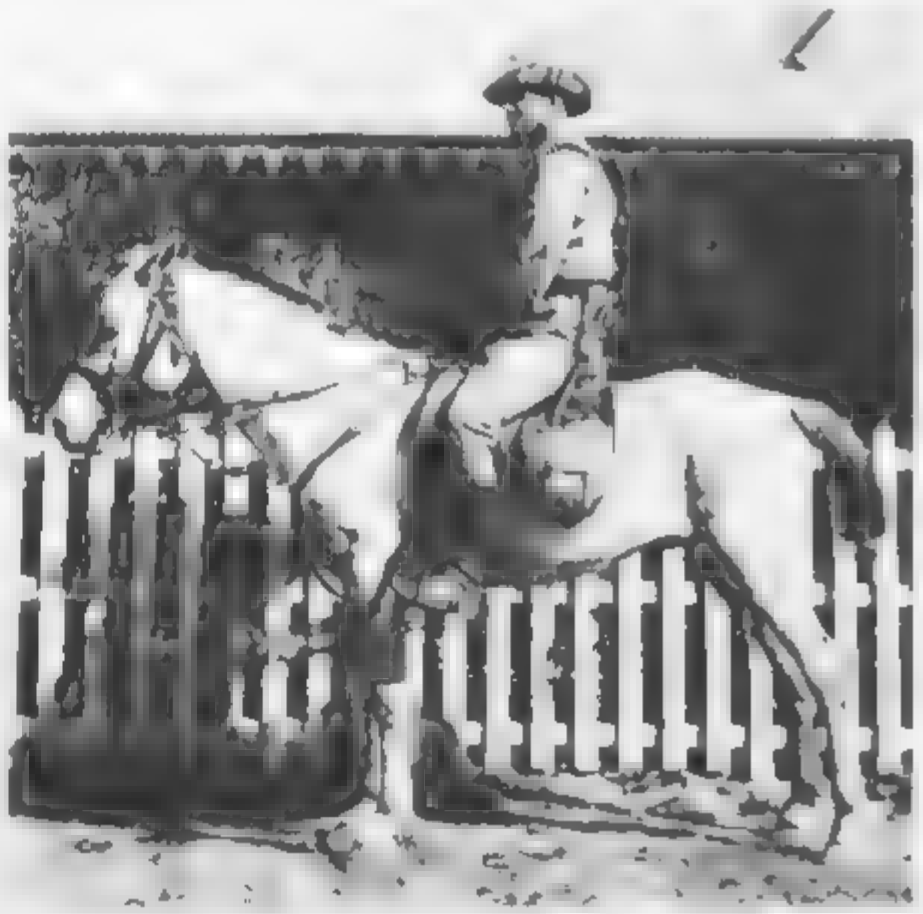
When Lord Roberts arrived in South Africa he immediately set about reorganising his army to give it more mobility and to relegate the railway to a subordinate position in his forthcoming campaign. Kitchener, whose task was to reorganise the transport system set up by Buller, soon found himself unpopular. The reasons for the discord were given in a nutshell by Julian Ralph, special correspondent of the *Daily Mail:*

'His first conspicuous act when in South Africa was the withdrawal of the transport service from separated commands in order that it should be managed by the Army Service Corps. Thus it came about that every brigadier and colonel saw a certain amount of his power shifted to what he considered a subordinate branch of the service. A goodish degree of latitude in the enjoyment of comforts and extras, which had been made possible when these officers controlled the waggons, was also curtailed. The army wailed and gnashed its teeth, but I confess I always thought that reason and right were on Lord Kitchener's side in this matter. Lord Kitchener's plan was the only one by which an insufficient number of waggons and teams could be utilised for all that they were worth.'

In practice the new system was unworkable and after a few weeks a return to something like the old system was permitted.

On 8 February 1900, Roberts and Kitchener arrived at Modder River Camp, where 37,000 men, 113 guns, 12,000 horses and 22,000 transport animals had been concentrated. Roberts' plans had been made but in the interest of secrecy they were only known to himself, Lord Kitchener and Colonel G. F. R. Henderson, the Chief Intelligence Officer. Lord Methuen's 1st Division would contain General Cronje's army at Magersfontein, while the 7th Division under General Tucker took Jacobsdal to the south-east. The main attack was to be delivered by General French's Cavalry Division, the 6th Division under Kelly-Kenny, the 9th Division under Colvile and a Brigade of Mounted Infantry. These formations were to march to Ramdam, some seventeen miles to the south, change direction to the east and cross the Riet River at De Kiel's Drift, then march northwards and cross the Modder River at Klip Drift. From there the Cavalry Division would make a dash for Kimberley to the north-west

As the strategy depended on secrecy Colonel Henderson was ordered to create a deception plan. False orders and telegrams were dispatched implying a troop concentration at Colesburg and a newspaper correspondent was given *confidential* information with a request not to use it in his dispatches. As was hoped the correspondent, to get a scoop for his paper, wired the information to his editor who promptly published it. The War Office, also ignorant of Roberts' intentions immediately sent a telegram to the Commander-in-Chief drawing his attention to a serious indiscretion of a member of his staff. The deception was a complete success and when the real line



Corporal Richards of the Imperial Yeomanry

of advance became common knowledge the correspondent complained bitterly to Roberts about his ' . unfair and dishonest treatment

On the night of 10 February, Roberts addressed the officers of the Cavalry Division and the regimental commanders:

'I have asked General French to call you together as I want to tell you that I am going to give you some very hard work to do, but at the same time you are to get the greatest chance cavalry has ever had. I am certain you will do well. I have received news from Kimberley from which I know that it is important the town should be relieved in the course of the next five days, and you and your men are to do this. The enemy have placed a big gun in position and are shelling the town, killing women and children, in consequence of which the civilian population are urging Colonel Kekewich to capitulate. You will remember what you are going to do all your lives, and when you have grown to be old men you will tell the story of the relief of Kimberley. My intention is for you to make a detour and get on the railway north of the town. The enemy are afraid of the British cavalry, and I hope when you get them into the open you will make an example of them.'

At 1.30 a.m. the following morning the Cavalry Division moved off for Ramdam, ' . . . the beat of twenty thousand hoofs, the clank of steel, and the rumble of gunwheels and tumbrills swelling into a deep, low roar like the surge upon the shingle.' The Riet and Modder Rivers had to be crossed before Cronje was able to detach men to defend them. At dawn the Riet, defended by a small party of the enemy was reached but after firing a few shots the Boers fled, leaving the way clear. The crossing was completed by midnight. When the news eventually reached Cronje, that a large British force was moving round from Ramdam, he sent 850 men under Christian de Wet and his brother Andries Cronje, to protect the threatened flank.

On the morning of the 13th, the column set off to cross the dry parched land that separated the Riet from the Modder River. In the distance Boer scouts watched the advance but apart from a small skirmish all went well and just after sunset the Modder River was reached. The small detachments of Free Staters camped around Klip Drift fled at the approach of the column leaving the way clear for the men, supply waggons and artillery to cross the river during the night

Next day the cavalry halted to allow the infantry to catch up and to give their horses a rest. The delay gave Cronje the opportunity to gather as many men as he could, together with a few artillery pieces and place them in a strong position on two parallel ridges of hills which had a low connecting neck, situated to the north of Klip Drift and lying between the British column and Kimberley.

Transvaal Burghers on outpost, 1899–1900

Canadian troops storming a kopje. Note the helmet flash with the maple-leaf badge

About one hour after moving off the next morning the column came under fire from the Boer position. French conferred with his brigadiers and then ordered that a charge be made on the low nek between the hills, which he anticipated would offer less resistance. The 3rd Brigade under Colonel Gordon was to extend in line and take the nek at a gallop, followed by the 2nd Brigade and the 1st Brigade; the horse artillery batteries were to keep firing until the last minute and then follow.

The four available squadrons Gordon, ' deployed in extended order, eight yards between files, with the 9th Lancers on the right, under Major M. O. Little, the 16th Lancers on the left under Major S. Frewen. The rear ranks formed a second line twenty yards behind. Placing himself at the head of his brigade, Gordon led it forward at a pace of about fourteen miles an hour, which he judged to be the fastest that the horses in their enfeebled condition could keep up; the nek was about two miles off, the ground was good, and fortunately free from wire. The squadrons came at once under a shower of bullets both from the front and flanks, yet few fell. The extended formation, the pace of the charge, and the thick clouds of dust puzzled the burghers, while the supporting fire of

'Guns in the Front', a stirring painting of the Royal Horse Artillery going into action by John Charlton

the batteries shook their aim. Though bullets knocked up jets of dust all round the extended files, the casualties of the main body of the leading brigade were slight. As the lines of Lancers approached, at a steadily increasing pace, the crest of the nek, the burghers manning it became nervous, shot worse and worse, and then mounted their ponies and galloped off in headlong flight The few staunch men who stayed behind to the end were struck down or made prisoners.'

After some minor skirmishes around the town, French finally entered Kimberley on the evening of 15 February, where he was met by Cecil Rhodes and Lieutenant-Colonel Kekewich, the military commander during the siege

For Roberts and Kitchener the problem now was to determine what Cronje would do. Retreat, yes, but where? He could fall back to the east or west side of Kimberley and join up with the forces just driven back by French, or he could try to escape to the east and make for Bloemfontein. On 16 February, General Cronje with a force of 4,000 men was found in the river bed at Paardeberg where he took up a defensive position.

Meanwhile, General Redvers Buller was still trying to break through to Ladysmith. On 5 February an attempt was made at Vaal Krantz, situated a few miles to the east of Spion Kop but after some vigorous fighting, in which a few sucesses were scored but not followed up, Buller's army once more fell back across the Tugela. British losses at Vaal Krantz were 31 killed and 17 officers and 318 other ranks wounded.

Buller's next advance commenced on 14 February. For fourteen days, until the 27th, continuous fighting took place on the right bank of the Tugela, culminating in the capture of the last two serious obstacles, Railway Hill and Pieter's Hill. The enemy fell back and disappeared into the distance leaving the road to Ladysmith open. The 118 day siege was over. Some of Buller's officers were all for persuing the Boers but he had no intention of following their advice. On 3 March, after assuring himself that the enemy really had gone, Buller at last made his formal entry into Ladysmith.

82nd Battery, Royal Field Artillery crossing at Paardeberg Drift

PAARDEBERG

On 17 February, while Roberts was ill with a fever at Jacobsdal and the Boers improved their position at Paardeberg by digging new trenches, Lord Kitchener, now in command, spent the day deciding his best course of action. He had the choice of besieging Cronje and then shelling and starving him into submission or he could mount an all-out attack on the Boer laager. He chose the latter and it turned out to be one of the most controversial episodes of his career.

Kitchener's plan was for Kelly-Kenny to launch a frontal attack from the south, while simultaneous assualts were launched on the east and west by General Colvile and by Hannay's mounted infantry. He also ordered French to attack with his cavalry from the north. French informed him that it was impossible as his men were too exhausted, but he would undertake to prevent the escape of the enemy northwards or the arrival of any Boer reinforcements from the north.

On the 18th the attack commenced. From dawn until dusk the battle raged on. As the official despatch stated:

'Early in the afternoon . . . it seemed likely that the laager would be captured, but the Boers held their ground so obstinately, and it was so difficult to force a passage through the trees and undergrowth fringing the river on both flanks, that the troops had to be drawn off. Heavy loss was inflicted on the enemy, while our own loss was hardly less serious .

'A kopje to the south-east of the position, commanding the Boer entrenchments, and the whole course of the stream from Paardeberg Drift upwards, was captured during the afternoon of the 18th, but retaken by the enemy after nightfall, owing to the Mounted Infantry who held it having gone down to the river to water their horses.'

Lord Roberts arrived at Paardeberg at 10 a.m. on the 19th and learnt that an armistice of 24 hours had been granted so that the Boers could bury their dead. Roberts, suspecting that it was a means for Cronje to gain time so that reinforcements could reach him from the south.

immediately revoked the armistice and ordered a heavy bombardment to be opened on the enemy position.

After examining the situation Roberts called his senior commanders together and told them that he had decided to lay siege to the Boer position. Kitchener was all for mounting another attack, but it was clear to Roberts that the laager could not be taken without ' . . . a further loss of life, which did not appear to me to be warranted by the military exigencies of the situation.'

During the afternoon of the 20th the Boer laager and the entrenchments surrounding it were shelled for several hours. On the 21st and 22nd the process was continued and trenches were gradually pushed forward on both flanks, mainly to the north, in case of an eventual assault.

At 3 a.m. on 27 February 1900, the nineteenth anniversary of the battle of Majuba, the Royal Canadian Regiment and No. 7 Company, Royal Engineers, supported by the 1st Battalion Gordon Highlanders, advanced under heavy fire to within eighty yards of the enemy's position and succeeded in entrenching themselves. The action was described by A. W. A. Pollock, one of *The Times*'s twenty-four war correspondents in South Africa:

'From the existing trench, some 700 yards long, on the northern bank, held jointly by the Gordons and the Canadians, the latter were ordered to advance in two lines – each, of course, in extended order – thirty yards apart, the first with bayonets fixed, the second reinforced by fifty Royal Engineers under Colonel Kincaid and Captain Boileau.

'In dead silence, and covered by a darkness only faintly illuminated by the merest rim of the dying moon . . . the three companies of Canadians moved on over the bush-strewn ground. For over 400 yards the noiseless advance continued, and when within eighty yards of the Boer trench the trampling of the scrub betrayed the movement. Instantly the outer trench of the Boers burst into fire, which was kept up almost without intermission from five minutes to three o'clock to ten minutes past the hour. Under this fire the courage and discipline of the Canadians proved themselves. Flinging themselves to the ground, they

Highlanders inspecting the guns captured from the Boers at Paardeberg. Note the khaki apron, plainly visible on the Highlander on the right

Lord Roberts, wearing his Khandahar sword, receiving the surrender of General Cronje at Paardeberg

kept up an incessant fire on the trenches, guided only by the flashes of their enemy's rifles; and the Boers admit that they quickly reduced them to the necessity of lifting their rifles over their heads to the edge of the earthwork and pulling their triggers at random. Behind this line the Engineers did magnificent work; careless of danger, the trench was dug from the inner edge of the bank to the crest, and then for fifty or sixty yards out through the scrub. The Canadians retired three yards to this protection and waited for dawn, confident in their new position, which had entered the protected angle of the Boer position, and commanded alike the rifle-pits of the banks and the trefoil-shaped embrasures on the north.'

At 6 a.m. Lord Roberts received the following letter from General Cronje.

'Honoured Sir,

'Herewith I have the honour to inform you that the Council of War, which was held here last evening, resolved to surrender unconditionally with the forces here, being compelled to do so under existing circumstances. They therefore throw themselves on the clemency of Her Britannic Majesty.

'As a sign of surrender a white flag will be hoisted from 6 a m. to-day. The Council of War requests that you will give immediate orders for all further hostilities to be stopped, in order that more loss of life may be prevented.'

Just before 8 a.m. General Pretyman, with a small escort, rode out to meet Cronje and bring him back to Roberts' headquarters. Charles Hands, a special correspondent, described the scene for the readers of the *Daily Mail*:

'The trim figure of the Chief caught my eye first. He was alone in front of the little lean-to tent fixed to the side of a travelling waggon in which he works and sleeps. His grey face, grave and thoughtful, showed no sign of elation. He looked around, gave an order to one of his Staff, and a table and two chairs were brought out of his tent and placed under the shade of a tree at the edge of the river bank.

'He gave another order, and half a company of Highlanders formed up in three sides of a square

Z.A.R. (Transvaal) Artillery in the field, 1899–1900

about the spot.

'The Chief looked carefully around, saw everything was in order, then walked to his tent. When he came out again he was wearing his sword – a heavy sword with a jewelled hilt. It was the first time I had seen him wearing it since the column started. But he forgets nothing, overlooks nothing, considers everything. And he had donned his sword now as a mark of respect for his fallen foe

'Presently the body of horsemen came past the hospital tents into the camp. Major-General Pretyman was one of the leading horsemen, his compact figure lightly swinging with the movement of his charger. By his side a great heavy bundle of a man was lumped atop of a wretched little grey bony Boer pony.

'And this was the terrible Cronje

'Was it possible that this was the man who had held back the British army at Magersfontein? Great square shoulders, from which the heavy head was thrust forward so that he seemed almost humped; a heavy face, shapeless with unkempt, grey-tinged, black hair; lowering heavy brows, from under which small, cunning, foxy eyes peered shiftily. A broad-brimmed grey Boer felt hat was pulled down low, a loose brown overcoat, ordinary dark trousers; nothing military, not even spurs on his brown veldt boots. The only thing he carried that seemed to speak authority was his sjambok, a thick, heavy stocked whip of hide, which he grasped and swung as one accustomed to use it.'

Roberts stepped forward, saluted, shook hands, then uttered a few words of greeting. The two men then sat down and completed the details of the surrender

The total Boer prisoners numbered 3,919, besides about 150 wounded, of whom 1,327 were of the Orange Free State and 2,592 of the Transvaal. The surrender at Paardeberg was a blow from which the Boers never fully recovered and marked the turning point of the war

BLOEMFONTEIN

On 1 March, while the troops at Paardeberg began their march to the new headquarters at Osfontein, Roberts proceeded to Kimberley where he discussed with Lord Methuen the measures to be taken for the relief of Mafeking. The next day he rode to Osfontein and began to plan his move on Bloemfontein. It had been his original intention to move on the capital of the Orange Free State as soon as Cronje had surrendered but he found that his cavalry and artillery horses were so exhausted that he was forced to hold back for a week.

On 7 March, the army moved out against the Boer forces under Christian de Wet who had taken

up a position in a line of kopjes on either side of the Modder River at Poplar Grove, some fifty miles west of Bloemfontein. French's mounted troops were to ride in a wide arc to the enemy's right and attack from the rear, while an infantry division would follow him up and attack from the right, pushing the Boers towards the river, where a second division would attack from the front while a third, on the opposite bank, would prevent the Boers escaping or receiving any aid from that side. Although French's half-starved horses made very slow progress, it made no difference to the Boers, who retreated in disorder without putting up a fight.

Three days later, after halting at Poplar Grove, Roberts' army advanced in three columns, ten miles apart, on Bloemfontein. Apart from a rear-

Questioning a captured Boer

guard action by the Boers at Abraham's Kraal, which held up the advance for a whole day, all went well and on 13 March 1900, Lord Roberts entered the capital of the Orange Free State.

On 17 March a message was received from Colonel Baden-Powell at Mafeking. The Boers were still besieging the town, though in reduced numbers, and the food supplies would only last until about 18 May. Colonel Plumer was approaching Mafeking from the north, but it was doubtful whether he could break through the Boer lines. One month later, 17 April, Lord Roberts ordered the formation of a flying column under Colonel B. T. Mahon, 8th Hussars, to undertake the relief of the beleaguered town.

MAFEKING

In August 1899, Colonel Baden-Powell arrived in Rhodesia with orders to raise two regiments of mounted infantry and, in the event of war with the South African Republics, to organise the defence of the Rhodesian and Bechuanaland borders. By the end of September the two regiments were equipped and ready for service but as war became imminent Baden-Powell realised that his force would be too weak unless it was augmented He reported this but there were no troops available so he decided to split his force into two and concentrate them at Tuli and Mafeking. Leaving the northern column under the command of Colonel Plumer at Tuli, Baden-Powell rode to Mafeking and began to organise its defences. A complicated system of trenches, dug-outs and forts was built, as well as bomb-proof shelters to house the women and children and some of the vital food supplies. To defend the town Baden-Powell had 745 trained soldiers and 450 partly-trained volunteers from the district. His artillery consisted of four 7-pdrs, all muzzle loading, besides 7 Maxim machine-guns, a 1-pdr Hotchkiss and a 2-inch Nordenfeld

The siege began on 13 October, when Cronje with an army estimated at between 4,000 and 9,000 men surrounded the town. During the first phase of the siege, October and November, the Boers made various attempts to take the place but the attacks were beaten off each time. The British also attacked, making little sorties against the Boer camps, but these engagements outside the town were few and far between. On the afternoon of 23 October, the bombardment of the town began in earnest when a 94-pdr Creusot opened up from the south. On 18 November, General Cronje with 4,000 men and six guns, quitted Mafeking and moved south for Kimberley, leaving General Snyman with an estimated force of 3,000 men and six guns, including the 94-pdr, nicknamed by the besieged as 'Old Creaky', to carry on the investment.

Realising the gravity of the situation and the necessity of holding out for an undetermined length of time, until a relief column could fight its way through, Baden-Powell took strict measures. He assumed the management of the '. . . hospital municipality, police, treasury, post and telegraph,

A Group of Burghers at Colesburg, February 1900

railway, native affairs, water supply, ordnance shops etc.' He also took over all food, forage, liquor stores and native supplies and instituted rationing. An inventory of all merchant stocks was made by Captain Ryan of the Army Service Corps who also worked out a scale of rationing which came into force on the 17 November. The allowance per person per day was: Meat–1lb, Bread–1lb, Vegetables–1lb, Coffee–⅓oz, Salt–½oz, Sugar 2ozs, Tea–½oz. All the available tinned meat was stored in bomb-proof shelter and kept as a reserve for when the fresh meat ran out.

Siege life was slowly becoming monotonous and supplies became more limited. Hamilton, the correspondent of *The Times*, wrote, 'How wearily the time passes.' F. D. Baillie of the *Morning Post* took the whole thing much less seriously, 'In this war of "sit down" I, for one, have worn out much patience and several pairs of trousers.' Emerson Neilly attempted to give the readers of the *Pall Mall Gazette* some idea of what the scarcity of diet meant:

'You are in a trench. In the early morning you have handed to you a piece of bread as big as a breakfast roll and a little tin of "bully" sufficient for one average meal. You have some of it for breakfast, and if you have not an iron will you will eat the lot there and then, and go hungry for the rest of the twenty-four hours. What you leave is kept in the broiling sun until luncheon-time, when you find the beef reduced to an oily mess that does not look very appetising. You eat more and tighten your belt a hole or two to delude yourself into the belief that you have had a satisfying meal. You roast away again until dinner-time, when you gather up the last crumb . But this is not all you are for guard duty from midnight until 3 a.m You have no sleep before you go on, and the slumber you fall into when relieved is destroyed an hour after you have entered upon it by the morning order to stand to arms. You thus get a schoolboy's luncheon to keep you alive for twenty-four hours. It is made unpalatable by the sun, and if a Mafeking shower falls, the odds are that it will be flooded over and buried in the mud at the bottom of the trench.'

The siege dragged on, but the morale of the besieged rose steadily higher as news of Paardeberg and the reliefs of Ladysmith and Kimberley reached them. In April the garrison received a

General Louis Botha, who took over command of all the Transvaal forces after the death of Joubert, returning from the fight at Kliprivier

telegram from Queen Victoria, which did much to raise their spirits: ' I continue watching with confidence and admiration the patient and resolute defence which is so gallantly maintained under your ever resourceful command.'

On 12 May 1900, the Boers attacked and managed to break in. At about 4 a.m. a very heavy rifle fire was opened up on the town from the east, north-east and south-east, the alarm was sounded and the garrison stood up. At about 4 30 some 300 Boers made a rush through the western outposts and got into the native village, which they set on fire. After capturing the South African Police fort and the sixteen men in it, the Boers divided into three groups. This made the defenders' task much easier. Each group was attacked separately: the first party surrendered, the second was driven out and the third, after a desperate attempt to break out, was forced to surrender. Among the one hundred and eight prisoners taken was Commandant Eloff, the grandson of President Kruger.

Meanwhile, near Tuli, Colonel Plumer had prevented a Boer invasion of Matabeleland from the south, after which he descended the railway to within 35 miles of the besieged town. Early in May he was reinforced and on the 15th joined up with Colonel Mahon's force sent by Lord Roberts At dawn on 16 May the combined relief column struck camp and made for Mafeking

'We advanced at 6.30 a.m. towards Mafeking, along the north or right bank of the Molopo, in two parallel columns at half a mile interval, the convoy in the centre and slightly in rear.

'Plumer's brigade on the right and Edwardes' on the left. At Sani's Post, about 12.30 p.m., firing was heard on the left front, and I advanced Edwardes' brigade; Plumer's at the same time advancing along the river; the convoy following on the road in rear of and between the two brigades. As we advanced I found that the Boers had taken up positions all around us, and had five guns and two pompoms in positions in different places.

'The convoy rather impeded my movements, as it was under shell fire, and the Boers were trying to attack it from both flanks and also from the rear, so I had to strengthen both my flank and rear guards, at the same time I continued my

Royal Army Medical Corps in the field, 1900

advance on Mafeking; the Boers retiring from our front and keeping up with us on the flanks. Our Artillery, especially the Royal Horse Artillery, were making very good practice. At 4.40 p.m. I ordered Colonel Edwardes to bring up his left and turn the Boer right flank, this movement was entirely successful. At 4.40 p.m. I had a message from Colonel Plumer to say his advance was checked on the right by a gun and pompom fire from the White Horse (Israel's Farm). I ordered the Royal Horse Artillery to shell the house. They soon silenced the gun, but not the pompom. I then sent Captain Carr with the infantry to take the house, which they did, and captured one waggon and a lot of pompom ammunition. It was by this time getting dark, or I think they would have got the pompom.

'At 5.45 p.m. all firing, except stray shots of the rear guard, had ceased, and the Boers had retired from all parts . . .

'At 11 p.m., after ascertaining by patrol that the road was open, I ordered an advance on Mafeking. We started at 12.30 a.m., and marched seven miles to Mafeking, which place we entered at 3.30 a.m. on the 17th of May, 1900.'

At 9.17 p.m. on 18 May 1900, a telegram announcing the relief of Mafeking, after a siege of 217 days, arrived at Reuter's News Agency from their correspondent in Pretoria. At 9.35 a placard was placed outside the Mansion House in the city and a notice was posted outside the offices of the *Daily Telegraph*, the first paper to communicate the news to the public. London went wild. A *Times* reporter described the scene at Piccadilly:

'The Circus was jammed with people. And then a cornet or some such instrument struck up *God Save the Queen*. Immediately thousands of voices took it up and in a twinkling every hat was off. It was a wonderful sight under the glare of the Criterion lamps. The walls around the big space were alive with cheering and gesticulating figures. The pavements and the streets blocked with them, and motionless among them the streams of omnibuses and cabs, all crowded with persons waving hats, umbrellas, flags anything . . . I saw many cabs fairly blazing with Union Jacks; the people had obviously taken them to the theatre in anticipation. No one minded being stopped or crushed. Ladies in evening-dress were squeezed in the crowd, but only smiled happily. And over it all and throughout it all and through it all the cheers thundered on in a continuous roar like the sound of a heavy surf on a rocky shore.'

The Plates

A1 Colour-Sergeant, Infantry of the Line, full dress
The Home Service pattern helmet, generally known as the 'Blue Cloth' helmet, was introduced by General Order 40 of May 1878, and replaced the shako that had been worn since 1869. The fittings, spike, plate, rosettes and chinchain were all in brass. The helmet plate took the form of an eight-pointed star surmounted by a crown with, after the Cardwell reforms of 1881, a central circle, bearing the title of the regiment surrounding the regimental badge, e.g. 'Royal Irish' on the circle with the harp and crown badge in the centre.

The Wiltshire Regiment in action with a Maxim gun near Norvals Pont

The 1881 reforms not only affected the regimental title, they also changed the facing colours of nearly every infantry regiment. Royal regiments had Roval blue collar and cuffs, English and Welsh regiments had white, Scottish regiments had vellow and Irish regiments had green The shape of the tunic cuff was also changed from pointed to round. Hence, it was often known as the 'jampot' cuff.

The rank of Colour-Sergeant was introduced by General Order, dated 6 July 1813. The original badge was changed in 1868 to the one shown, which has three gold lace chevrons with crossed union flags and a crown above.

A2 Private, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, service dress
The foreign service helmet was introduced in 1877. Made of cork covered in khaki cloth, it was usually worn with the curtain or neck protector. The tunic was also of khaki cloth and had a stand and fall collar and plain cuffs, and fastened down the front with five General Service buttons. Trousers were of the same material and were worn with puttees. The equipment was the 1888 Slade Wallace pattern.

There was little to distinguish one regiment from another, the only individuality being the small patch on the left side of the helmet. A war correspondent bemoaning the all-khaki uniform wrote that, '. . . if you pass to starboard, you catch sight of a three-inch square of scarlet cloth sewn on the khaki coloured helmet cover, with some such legend as "Yorks", "Essex" or "L.N. Lancs", and you recognise the line man.' These patches were made from the shoulder straps of old tunics and therefore in some regiments, such as the one depicted, had the addition of a badge, e.g. R.W.F with a grenade above.

A3 Private, Mounted Infantry Company, service dress
Since 1888, a regular mounted infantry force had been established in the British Army, but it was not until the South African War that such large numbers of them were used, to counteract the manoeuvrability of Boer commandos. Their dress during the war was a cross between infantry and cavalry as can be seen from the illustration, although later, under campaign conditions and as

British troops preparing an explosive charge during the campaign of 'farm burning'

contemporary photographs show, their appearance became less uniform.

B1 Lieutenant, Royal Navy, tropical dress
In 1885, a white uniform was adopted by the Royal Navy. At the time of the South African war it consisted of a white helmet fitted with a white cotton pugri in six folds with a row of dark blue silk showing at the top edge. The tunic, made of white cotton drill was single breasted with a stand collar and had five brass buttons down the front. The breast pockets were without flaps. Shoulder straps of blue with the ranking in gold lace were worn on each shoulder.

B2 Gunner's Mate, Naval Brigade, service dress
The Sennet hat, which finally disappeared from use in 1921, was worn with a khaki cover. The blue tallyband bore the name of the sailor's ship in gold letters, e.g. 'H.M.S. POWERFUL'. In place of puttees all ranks below that of midshipman appear to have worn grey canvas gaiters. The badge, in red embroidery on a blue ground, had crossed cannon barrels surmounted by a crown with a star beneath.

B3 Lieutenant, Naval Brigade, service dress
The Naval Brigade at this time were dressed as the Army: khaki frock, trousers and khaki helmet. The only differences were the Naval sword, with gilt hilt, the blue shoulder straps with gold lace ranking, and the blue puttees. This was the first occasion that Naval Brigades landed for shore duty dressed in khaki.

C1 Gunner, Orange Free State Artillery, full dress
In October 1880 a new uniform was designed for the corps which had the general appearance of that of the Royal Field Artillery, but by 1895 a complete change seems to have taken place as contemporary photographs show a distinctly German style of uniform being worn. The *pickelhaube* bore the Arms of the State on the front and had a brass ball finial on the top. In full dress the ball was removed and replaced by an orange and white hair plume. The tunic, in Prussian blue cloth, had black cuffs and collar piped and ornamented with orange braid.

C2 Gunner, Transvaal State Artillery, service dress
The service dress consisted of a wide-brimmed bush hat with the right side turned up and a tunic of light mouse-coloured drill with Royal blue standing collar and shoulder straps, fastening down the front with brass buttons. The trousers were of the same material as the tunic and had a Royal blue stripe down the outside seam of each leg.

At the outbreak of war in 1899, the Transvaal Artillery were armed with four 6 in. Creusots, four 4.7 Krupp Howitzers, eight 2.95 Krupp, and two Maxim Nordenveld quick-firers and twenty-two 1-pdr automatic Vickers Maxims (Pom-Pom) horsed.

C3 Boer
Uniforms, like the military manual, had no place in the commando system. The Boer turned out to fight in his normal everyday clothes. The only item of dress that could be termed military was the leather bandolier.

D Trumpeter, 17th Lancers, service dress
By the end of 1900, steps were taken to improve the mobility and fighting power of the cavalry. The 17th Lancers discarded their swords and lances, and the Short Lee-Enfield Carbine that was used at the beginning of the war was exchanged for the standard infantry Lee-Enfield rifle which had a far greater range and was more accurate. Trumpeters wore a brown leather holster and were issued with a pistol. Both bugle and trumpet were carried, the former for mounted calls and the latter for more elaborate camp and barrack calls.

E Boer

'Sitting their horses like cowboys, they wore what they had stood up in when they were called up, and their rifles and bandoliers were slung carelessly on their persons according to individual inclination. A raincoat or blanket, or both, were rolled tightly and fastened to the pommel or tail of each saddle, and in most cases saddle-bags stuffed to bursting with boer rusks, bread, and biltong (dried meat), completed their outfits.'

F1 Officer, Suffolk Regiment, service dress

Not all regiments conformed to wearing cut-down shoulder straps on the side of their helmets: and one of these deviants was the Suffolk Regiment. On 6 November 1899, the following Battalion Order was issued by Colonel A. J. Watson: 'Yellow cloth patches will be sewn on each side of the khaki helmet, over the ears. These are cut to form a castle. The bottom of the patch to be 4½ inches above the bottom of the helmet.' On 15 March 1911, the following order discontinued their use: 'The Commanding Officer regrets to announce that orders have been received to remove from khaki helmets the yellow castle cloth patches which have been worn by the regiment for many years both in peace and war.'

F2 Army Reserve Nursing Sister

This illustration, taken from a sketch by S. M. Laurence, special correspondent for the *Black and White Budget*, shows the type of dress worn by nurses at this period: red cape, blue dress and white apron. As well as the Red Cross badge worn on the cape, a white armband with the Red Cross was worn on the upper left arm. During the South African war a number of people raised money for hospital ships and trains. One such person was Lady Randolph Churchill who had charge of the hospital ship *Maine*. The Army nursing service was formed in 1881 and the reserve was formed some years later.

F3 Private, City Imperial Volunteers, service dress

The City Imperial Volunteers were a composite regiment made up of drafts from London Volunteer units and were equipped at the expense of the City. By February 1900, about 1,750 men of the C.I.V.'s were in South Africa, including 400

A blockhouse and its garrison. By the end of the war the system consisted of some 8,000 blockhouses extending over an area of 3,700 miles

mounted infantry and a battery of 12½-pdr Vickers-Maxim quick-firing guns manned by the Honourable Artillery Company. In the early part of the war they were issued with a uniform of khaki drill but this was found unsuitable and was replaced by one of drab serge.

G1 Piper, Black Watch, service dress

The regulation khaki helmet was worn with the addition of a red hackle on the left side, tucked into the pugri. In 1900, khaki aprons were issued to kilted regiments to cover only the front of the kilt, and these had a pocket to replace the sporran. Pipers wore a kilt of Royal Stewart tartan, with the bag of the pipes in the regimental tartan.

G2 Officer, Highland Light Infantry, service dress

The officer shown is dressed as he would have been at the outbreak of war. The khaki helmet had a patch of regimental tartan on the left instead of the usual scarlet patch mentioned in the description of Plate A2. The greatcoat was in dark grey material and double breasted, the officers ranking being in metal on the shoulder straps. The usual 'Sam Browne' equipment with holster, belt and braces together with sword frog were worn.

Presentation of South African War Medals to the Royal Irish Fusiliers at Belfast, 1902

Later on during the war, when officers dressed like the men to avoid the attention of Boer marksmen, an additional tartan patch was sewn on the back of the helmet.

G3 Private, Gordon Highlanders, full dress
The bonnet of black Ostrich feathers had a diced border at the headband and a white hackle on the left side. The bonnet badge was in white metal and bore the crest of the Marquis of Huntley within an ivy wreath with a scroll at the base reading *Bydand*. The scarlet doublet had yellow collar and gauntlet cuffs, the latter decorated with three white worsted button loops and brass buttons. The shoulder straps were of scarlet cloth embroidered with the word 'GORDON'. The illustration depicts a private dressed for guard duty.

H1 Dispatch rider, Duke of Edinburgh's Volunteer Rifles, service dress
The side-cap was of blue cloth and bore the regimental badge on the left side. The tunic and trousers were of khaki cloth but the puttees were in dark brown material. The waist belt and bandolier were in brown leather.

H2 Trooper, South African Light Horse, service dress
The slouch hat of khaki felt had a pugri of light khaki round the headband and had the left side turned up. The plume was of dark green, almost black feathers. Tunic and breeches were khaki, the latter being worn with brown leather leggings in place of puttees. The bandolier and waist belt were of brown leather. One of the most famous members of this corps was Winston Churchill, who had the rank of Lieutenant and managed to mix his military career with that of special correspondent for the *Morning Post*.

H3 Corporal, New South Wales Lancers, full dress
The bush hat, in Arab felt with a red pugri round the headband, had the left side turned up and held in position by the regimental badge. Behind the turned up side was a dark green feather plume. The tunic was in Arab material, double-breasted, with collar, cuffs and plastron front in red. Trousers were of the same material as the tunic and had a red stripe down the outside seam of each leg. The girdle was of yellow worsted with two red stripes.

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